GUIDELINES FOR

OPERATING A DAY CARE FACILITY FOR CHILDREN

IN NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia
Department of
Community Services

1990

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

Who requires a license to operate a Day Care facility in Nova Scotia?

Any person or several individuals wishing to operate a Day Care facility for children who are apart from their parents or guardian, may apply for a license to operate a Day Care facility.

An application form, as well as other material pertinent to the establishing a Day Care facility for children are available by request from the Day Care office - Department of Community Services, at the address stated below.

A Day Care facility licensed by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services must provide:

- a physical environment which is safe for young children and meets the requirements of health and fire authorities;
- a daily program which:
  - stimulates the children's intellectual, physical, emotional and social development,
  - includes activities to encourage language development; and
  - provides a balance of indoor and outdoor play;
- nutritionally-balanced meals and snacks, and
- an appropriate number of trained staff members.

The guidelines in this booklet were prepared to assist operators and staff of Day Care facilities in the Province of Nova Scotia to meet these licensing requirements.

Day care facilities may include full day child care centres, pre-schools, nursery schools, child development centres, and programs for school aged children. In this booklet, the term 'day care centre' is used to include all types of licensed child care.

If you have a question or require more information, please contact:

Director of Day Care Services
Department of Community Services
Province of Nova Scotia
P. O. Box 696
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2T7
TELEPHONE: (902) 424-3204

ROLE OF THE NOVA SCOTIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

Administration and enforcement of the Day Care Act and Regulations in the Province of Nova Scotia are the responsibility of the Director of Day Care Services. The Director makes recommendations to the Minister of Community Services on the licensing and re-licensing of day care facilities. The Supervisor of Day Care Services assists individuals and groups interested in establishing day care facilities and supervises the operation of licensed facilities.

You may wish to consult the Day Care Services Section on such matters as:

- the interpretation of the Day Care Act and Regulations,
- improvements in your centre's program or operations, including such areas as equipment, play materials, record-keeping, nutrition and staff training, and
- the special needs of children, including diagnostic resources and intervention programs.

The Department of Community Services administers a subsidy program for eligible families who require financial assistance with their day care fees. These subsidy payments are made directly to those registered day care facilities that have been allocated subsidized spaces. Registered day care facilities are non-profit facilities incorporated under the Societies Act of Nova Scotia and managed by a community board of directors.

DAY CARE ACT AND REGULATIONS

An up-to-date copy of the Day Care Act (Chapter 6, Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1989) and Regulations must be available in your centre. Copies are available from Day Care Services.

RENEWING YOUR LICENSE

The license to operate a day care centre must be conspicuously displayed in your centre. Day care centres in Nova Scotia must be re-licensed by the Minister of Community Services on a regular basis. The expiry date of your centre's license is shown on your license.

Before your license expires, the Director of Day Care Services will send you a copy of the annual report for completion. This report must be returned six weeks before your license expires. Once this report is received, Day Care Services staff will visit your centre and Department of Health and Fitness will prepare a report on your health standards.

The Director of Day Care Services may recommend to the Minister of Community Services that your license:

1. be renewed; or
2. be renewed, subject to conditions stated on the license; or
3. not be renewed, if your centre does not meet the requirements of the Day Care Act and Regulations.

The Minister of Community Services may cancel, suspend or refuse to issue or renew your facility's license if the Day Care Act or Regulations are violated or if the conditions stated on your license are not met. The Minister will provide written reasons for the cancellation, suspension or refusal, and you may request the Minister to review the action.

CHANGES IN MANAGEMENT

Licenses to operate day care centres cannot be transferred. If the person to whom a license has been issued no longer operates or owns the centre, the license is cancelled and the new operator must apply for a new license in his or her name.

RIGHT OF ENTRY

The Director of Day Care Services (or a representative of the Director) is permitted to enter your centre at all reasonable times to examine the premises, equipment, facilities, books or records.

REGISTER

Each centre shall maintain a register containing the following information on each child:

1. name and birthdate of the child;
2. names, home addresses, work and home telephone numbers of the child's parents or guardians;
3. name and address of the child's physician;
4. name and telephone number of the person to be notified in an emergency;
5. names of people authorized to pick up the child from the centre;
6. dates on which the child was admitted and discharged; and
7. daily attendance, including arrival and departure times, if the program is full day.

CHILDREN'S RECORDS

An individual record for each child must be maintained which includes:

1. the completed application for admission;
2. initial medical report;
3. a minimum of two progress reports for each year of attendance; and
4. consent forms signed by the parents or guardians for emergency medical treatments and outings.

These individual records should be kept for two years after the child's discharge.

STAFF

The Director and two-thirds of staff must be graduates of a recognized early child education program or the equivalent. Please refer to page 13 of the Day Care Act and Regulations, Regulation 21A.

The Director of the Centre, or someone designated to be responsible, shall be in the facility at all times when children are present.

In centres providing a full day program, the ratio of staff working directly with children shall be no lower than:

- one staff member to every seven preschool children; and
- one staff member to every 15 school aged children.

In centres providing a part day program only, the ratio of staff working directly with preschool children shall be no lower than one staff member to every 12 children. A centre is considered to be providing a part day program if it is not open at noontime.

The following table shows recommended staff:child ratios with the recommended group size.

RECOMMENDED STAFF:CHILD RATIOS WITHIN GROUP SIZE*

	Group size								
Age of children	6	8	10	12	14	20	21	22	24
Infants (birth-12 mos.)	1:3	1:4							
Toddlers (12-24 mos.)	1:3	1:4	1:5	1:4					
Two-year-olds (24-36 mos.)		1:4	1:5	1:6					
Two-and-three-year-olds			1:5	1:6	1:7				
Three-year-olds					1:7		1:7		
Four-year-olds					1:7		1:7		
Four-and five-year-olds					1:7		1:7		
Five-to eight-year-olds (school age)						1:10		1:11	1:12

*For minimum requirements, refer to the Day Care Act.

Each staff member shall obtain a physician's certificate confirming that he or she is free from communicable diseases:

- prior to being employed; and
- on an annual basis thereafter.

DAILY SCHEDULE AND PROGRAM

The Program Specialist for Day Care Services is available for consultation about your program.

Your centre's daily schedule must be posted in a conspicuous place on the parent bulletin board. The daily schedule should include:

- a balance between active and quiet activities;
- a balance between group and individual activities;
- opportunities for child initiated activities; and
- planned indoor and outdoor activities which will improve gross motor abilities.

Regular staff meetings shall be held to develop written program plans in advance and to discuss the children's progress.

A daily plan book shall be maintained, indicating developmentally appropriate activities planned to enhance intellectual, language, socio-emotional and physical development. "Hands on" learning should be emphasized. A variety of curriculum models and planning methods is recognized as promoting children's development such as the High/Scope, Montessori, Waldorf, curriculum web and thematic approaches.

Program planning and experiences for children can be enhanced by:

- providing a safe comfortable environment for learning and living;

- providing children with a variety of choices;

- providing opportunities for children to reason, experiment and solve their own problems;

- selecting activities and resources that enhance social-emotional, language, physical development,

- including desirable nutritional, health and safety practices;

- encouraging creativity and awareness of the arts;

- encouraging appreciation of nature and the environment; and

- including activities that are non-competitive and reflect the cultural diversity of the children, staff, and the community.

Field trips or any other activities away from the centre shall be recorded in the daily plan book, including the children's destination and the expected time of their return to the centre.

BEHAVIOUR AND GUIDANCE

A well-planned program which meets the needs of each child will generally eliminate inappropriate behaviour in your day centre.

A written policy for your staff and volunteers regarding permitted and prohibited behaviour management practices must be posted on the parent bulletin board.

The following forms of discipline shall not be used:

1. corporal punishment, including, but not limited to the following:

    - striking a child directly or with any physical object;
    - shaking, shoving, spanking, or other forms of aggressive physical contact; and
    - requiring or forcing a child to repeat physical movements; and

2. harsh, humiliating, belittling or degrading responses of any form, including verbal, emotional or physical.

In developing your behaviour management policy, you should consider the following techniques for positively guiding children in learning appropriate behaviour:

1. Staff will adopt a positive attitude towards the children which includes enjoyment of and respect for the children as individuals.

2. Limits set should be enforced consistently and fairly.

3. Under certain circumstances, staff may want to use physical contact to guide behaviour, for example, holding a child to prevent disruptive behaviour. An adult touch during a frustrating situation may have a calming effect on the child, thereby avoiding or extinguishing destructive behaviour.

4. Discipline statements should be expressed positively wherever possible. Tell a child what can be done, rather than what cannot be done.

5. Staff shall sustain activity with the child and listen to the child during periods of upset behaviour.

6. A brief period of isolation of 'time-out' may sometimes be required. A child shall never be placed alone in a room, but may be removed from an activity for a period of quiet time.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Indoors

Rooms for the use of children under two years of age shall be on the ground floor. Rooms for the use of children between two and six years of age shall be on either the ground or second floors.

No more than 25 children shall be in a room or play area at any one time for rest or play.

Each child shall be allocated a cubicle or hook (at the child's eye level) for storing belongings.

Sinks and toilets suitable for young children shall be adjacent to play areas. At least one sink and one toilet shall be provided for every ten children.

Thirty square feet (2.75 square metres) of unobstructed play space (excluding kitchen, washrooms, hallways and storage areas) shall be provided for each child.

Outdoors

A supervised, safe, sanitary outdoor play area containing at least 60 square feet (5.5 square metres) of play space per child shall be available within a reasonable distance of the facility. In order to protect the children from hazards, the play area shall be surrounded by a fence at least four feet (1.5 metres) high.

Within the first year of operation, you must acquire a sand box and equipment, i.e., climbing frame and swing to encourage large muscle development.

SPACE AND EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

Infants (between the ages of three months and two years)

1. a separate naproom which must be on the ground floor;
2. a designated crib for each child under 18 months and a designated cot or mat for each child 18 months to two years old, with appropriate bedding;
3. one high chair for every three children under 18 months;

4. at least 30 square feet (2.75 square metres) of play space for each child which:
   - is separated from the older children in the facility; and
   - includes space for physical activity and a warm, safe crawling space.
5. a diapering table with a smooth, non-absorbent pad which can be cleaned after each diaper change;
6. a sink adjacent to the changing table so that staff may wash after each diaper change; and
7. an appropriate number of small tables and chairs for children between 18 months and two years.

Please refer to the Checklist for Inspection for Centres with Infants for details.

Pre-School Age Children (between the ages of two and five years and not attending school)

1. an appropriate number of child-sized tables and chairs;
2. play areas which include at least seven core activity areas:

CORE ACTIVITY AREAS	OPTIONAL ACTIVITY AREAS
art area	climber/gross motor area
library/language/book area	music/movement/dance area
sand play area	carpentry/woodworking area
water play area	pets area
block area	plants/science area
dramatic play/house area	
manipulative/quiet play area	

3. in the case of a full-day program, a designated cot or mat for each child with clean, moisture-resistant covers and bedding; and
4. individual face cloths, toothbrushes and paper towels or individual towers which are hung in the washroom on designated hooks at the child's eye level.

Please refer to the Checklist for Inspection for Centres with Preschoolers for details.

School-Age Children (children five years and older and attending school but registered at the facility in the morning, at noon, after school or for the afternoon only)

1. a designated space in the centre;
2. an appropriate number of tables and chairs for lunch and table-top activities;
3. play equipment which meets the children's interests, such as puzzles, games, crafts, books, housekeeping, sand, water and painting centre; and
4. individual face cloths, toothbrushes and paper towels or individual towels which are hung on designated hooks in the washrooms.

Please refer to the Checklist for Inspection for centres with school aged children for details.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Although the Department of Community Services annually inspects and licenses day care facilities in Nova Scotia to ensure that standards of child care defined in the Day Care Act and Regulations are being maintained, Regulation 23A recognizes that parents have both a right and a primary responsibility for selecting quality child care for their children and to monitor this care on an ongoing basis.

Regulation 23A requires that regular meetings be held between the licensed operator or member of the Board of Directors, the Director of the centre and parents. Parent involvement and support of day care centres is critical to the effective delivery of child care. This regulation is intended to strengthen the relationship between centres and the parents they serve.

Part day programs must have parent meetings at least once every six months. Full day programs must have parent meetings at least once every three months. This regulation does not apply to parent cooperatives because they hold regular meetings by definition.

Parents must be notified at least two weeks in advance of the meeting and must be permitted to place items on the agenda. If parents have not placed items on the agenda, the following items must be discussed:

a. the programs provided;
b. equipment and materials available for the children;
c. staffing patterns and staff qualifications; and
d. health and safety practices by and in the centre.

Minutes must be kept and posted on the parent bulletin board within two weeks of the meeting. The minutes must remain on the parent bulletin board until the next meeting.

MAKING PHYSICAL ALTERATIONS

Before you make any physical alterations to your centre, Day Care Services must be notified in writing so that the appropriate authorities are consulted regarding the effects of the planned alterations on the safety and needs of your children.

CLEANING

A schedule must be established assigning cleaning duties to staff members.

The following areas must be cleaned every day:

- kitchen;
- washrooms; and
- play areas.

Daily cleaning of infant play areas must include playpens, highchairs, toys and cribs. Crib sheets must be changed daily, more often if necessary.

The following areas should be cleaned once a week or more often:

- offices;
- halls; and
- cloakrooms.

TRANSPORTATION

If your day care centre provides transportation for your children, you are responsible for their safety while in transit. By law, children weighing 40 pounds (18 kg) or more must be secured with a seatbelt. Children weighing less than 40 pounds must be secured in a child restraint system unless the children are being transported on a "casual and occasional basis" in which case a seat belt must be used with toddlers. However, it is recommended that day care centres protect themselves from possible liability by only transporting infants and toddlers using child restraint systems. Each vehicle used to transport children must meet the requirements of the Motor Vehicle Act of Nova Scotia. In addition, you must check with your insurance company to ensure you have adequate coverage to transport the children and to determine the maximum number of children permitted in your vehicle and the number of adults required for supervision. A first aid kit should be provided in each vehicle and kept replenished.

If your staff members are transporting children as part of their duties in vehicles which are designed to carry 10-24 persons, i.e., vans or mini-buses, they must have a class 4 license from the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Drivers transporting children on behalf of your facility should personally deliver each child to:

- a member of your staff;
- the child's parent or guardian; or

- a person appointed in writing by the parent or guardian.

NUTRITION

If children stay at your centre over the noon-meal period, they must be given a nutritious meal which provides one-third of the recommended daily nutrients for their age group. Children attending full-day programs must also be given a nutritious snack in the morning and the afternoon.

Menus shall be prepared once a month in advance and posted on the parent bulletin board. Copies of menus served shall be kept for a one year period.

Children in part-day (morning or afternoon) programs shall have an appropriate nutritious snack during the session.

When planning meals and snacks for children, you must consult the Canada Food Guide.

Nutritionists in Department of Health and Fitness district offices provide consultation in food purchasing, menu planning and recipe suggestions for young children. The nutritional needs of infants should be planned in consultation with the nutritionists and the infants' parents or guardians.

MEDICAL PROCEDURES

According to the Day Care Act, each child must:

- undergo a medical examination and have immunization up-to-date before being admitted to your centre.

Community Health Nurses in the district offices of the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Fitness are available to all day care centres. You should consult these nurses regarding such matters as the normal growth of children, communicable diseases and general hygienic measures.

No prescription drug shall be given to any child in your centre, unless a physician and a parent have authorized you to administer this medication.

Specifically, the interpretation of Section 19(9) of the Day Care Act and Regulations is as follows:

- A prescription drug may be administered as directed by the physician on the prescription container for the child provided the parent has requested this in writing.

- A non-prescription drug may be administered if the parent has requested in writing that the child to be given this specific medicine.

The Department's requirements for Section 19(9) of the Regulations is that the parent or guardian must request in writing that the staff administer either a prescription or non-prescription drug.

All drugs and medicines shall be kept in a safe locked place out of the reach of children.

You shall keep a daily record of all drugs that have been administered on the written direction of the parent. This record shall include:

. name of the child receiving the drug;
. name of the drug;
. time of the drug's administration;
. amount of the drug administered; and
. signature of the staff member who administered the drug.

A first aid kit shall be readily available in your facility and constantly replenished to include at least:

. gauze;
. bandages;
. thermometer;

- antiseptic ointment;
- scissors; and
- adhesive tape.

All staff members shall have a basic knowledge of first aid, obtained by attending a Red Cross or St. John's Ambulance first aid course.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

When an accident, serious illness or communicable disease occurs in your centre, you shall immediately obtain the necessary medical assistance and notify the parents or guardians and the Director of Day Care Services.

Health

If a child in your centre shows symptoms of illness or is involved in an accident:

1. The child shall be placed in an isolation area with a staff member in constant attendance, and be made as comfortable as possible.

2. The child's parents or guardians shall be immediately notified and asked to come to the centre to take responsibility for the child. If the parent or guardian is not available, a physician shall be immediately called to examine the child or the child shall be taken to the nearest hospital or emergency health centre for treatment.

3. If an accident occurs, the staff member present at the time of the accident shall record the circumstances on the child's record and document every action taken by the centre. This report shall be signed by the supervisor on duty at the time of the accident.

Fire

Procedures to be followed in the case of fire or other emergency must be developed and posted on the parent bulletin board. These procedures shall include:

1. The person discovering the fire shall immediately call the fire department and sound the alarm.

2. Staff shall be assigned to safely evacuate the children from the facility and to check washrooms, closets and other possible hiding areas.

3. Staff members shall supervise the children in temporary accommodation until the children's parents or guardians arrive.

A fire drill shall be conducted at least once a month and a record maintained of:

- the date and time of the drill; and
- the length of time required to evacuate all the children from the centre.

Fire extinguishers approved by the Provincial Fire Marshall shall be provided in your centre, regularly inspected and replenished, and staff shall be trained in their proper use.

Fire extinguishers shall be checked at least annually by the appropriate authorities.

Fire exits must be kept clear of obstacles at all times.

Telephone Numbers and Children's Records

Addresses and telephone numbers for the following persons shall be posted by the telephone in your centre:

- taxi;
- ambulance;
- hospital;
- fire department;
- police; and
- other emergency services.

The children's records, including their medical reports and parents' or guardians' consent forms, and staff records shall be kept in the centre at all times and stored in a locked, fire-resistant, filing cabinet.

Power Failure

Serviceable flashlights shall be kept at the Centre and used as emergency lighting during a power failure.

Electrical Outlets

In play areas used by preschool children, all electrical outlets shall be covered.

Insurance

Your facility shall have adequate liability insurance and, where appropriate, fire, theft and automobile insurance.